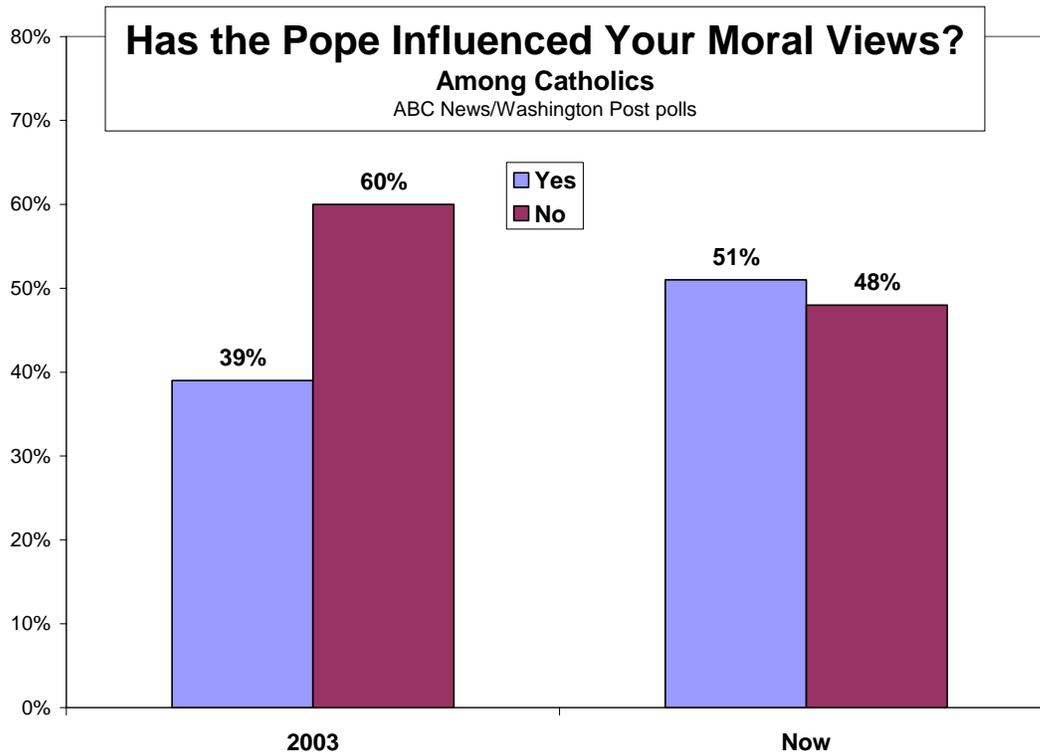


## **Pope is Broadly Popular, Though Most Would Shift Policy**

More American Catholics say Pope John Paul II has influenced their moral views, possibly an expression of heightened loyalty to the infirm pontiff. Nearly six in 10, however, also say the next pope should take steps to modernize church policies.

The pope is broadly popular: Sixty-seven percent of all Americans and 87 percent of Catholics view him favorably, about the same as in October 2003, on the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of his papacy. But in a change, 51 percent of Catholics now say John Paul II has influenced their moral views, up from 39 percent then.

That increase has come almost exclusively among practicing Catholics, those who attend church at least a few times a month – 69 percent say the pope has influenced their moral views, up from 50 percent in 2003. That suggests a rallying of the faithful to his side.



Far fewer non-Catholic Americans, nine percent, say the pope has influenced their moral views, virtually unchanged from 2003.

John Paul, who has Parkinson's disease, recently was released from the hospital after undergoing a tracheotomy to ease breathing problems brought on by the flu. The 84-year-old pontiff is convalescing and preparing for Easter Sunday, March 27.

**POLICIES** – In another, slighter change in the pope's direction, 41 percent of Catholics say the next pope should maintain the church's traditional policies, up from 33 percent in 2003. More churchgoing Catholics, but still barely a majority, 51 percent, hold this view.

That leaves 57 percent of Catholics overall (and 48 percent of churchgoing Catholics) who instead say the next pope should change church policies to reflect the attitudes and lifestyles of Catholics today. It was slightly higher, 64 percent, in 2003.

There's a gender gap on this issue. Catholic men are more likely than Catholic women to prefer a pope who would maintain traditional policies.

Like churchgoing Catholics, those who prefer traditional church policies are considerably more likely to say the pope has influenced their personal moral views.

**NEXT POPE** – Catholics are more apt to prefer that the next pope come from the developed world rather than from the developing world, but as many say it doesn't matter. Thirty-nine percent would prefer a pope from "the developed world, especially Europe, where almost all previous popes have come from"; 22 percent say he should be from "the developing world, especially South America or Africa, where the church is growing fastest." But 37 percent volunteer that it doesn't make a difference.

Churchgoing Catholics are more apt than others to prefer a pope from the developed world; so are those who prefer traditional church policies.

**CATHOLICS and CHURCH** – Catholics represent just over a fifth of the adult U.S. population – 21 percent in this poll, about its average the last several years. Nearly six in 10 are regular churchgoers, including 36 percent who say they attend church at least once a week and 22 percent who say they attend a few times a month. The rest go less often.

That's a better attendance record than mainline Protestants', among whom 24 percent attend church at least weekly. Weekly churchgoing peaks at 60 percent among evangelical or born-again Protestants.

Age is a significant factor in Catholics' church attendance: Forty-eight percent of those 45 and older attending at least weekly, compared with 24 percent of Catholics under age 45. There's no such age gap in church attendance among Protestants.

**METHODOLOGY** – This ABC News/Washington Post poll was conducted by telephone March 10-13, 2005, among a random national sample of 1,001 adults, including 222 Catholics. The results have a three-point error margin for the full population, and 6.5 points for Catholics. Sampling, data collection and tabulation by TNS of Horsham, Pa.

Analysis by Jon Cohen.

ABC News polls can be found at ABCNEWS.com at <http://abcnews.com/pollvault.html>.

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Full results follow (\*= less than 0.5 percent).

30. On another subject, do you have a favorable or unfavorable impression of Pope John Paul the Second?

		Favorable	Unfavorable	No opinion
3/13/05	All	67	16	17
	Cath.	87	8	5
10/13/03	All	65	24	11
	Cath.	84	11	5
1/12/98	All	71	10	19
10/1/95	All	64	20	16
	Cath.	83	10	7
	Non-Cath.	58	23	19
8/8/93	All	68	12	20
8/23/87	All	51	8	41
	Cath.	76	4	20
	Non-Cath.	41	8	51

31. Has John Paul the Second had an influence on you personally in terms of your moral views, or not? IF YES: Has it been a strong influence, or not strong?

		-----Yes-----			No	No
		NET	Strong	Not strong	No	opin.
3/13/05	All	18	12	6	81	1
	Cath.	51	38	12	48	1
10/13/03	All	18	10	9	80	2
	Cath.	39	27	13	60	1

32. (ASKED OF CATHOLICS) Do you think the next pope should (maintain the traditional policies of the Church), or should he (change Church policies to reflect the attitudes and lifestyles of Catholics today)?

	Maintain policies	Change policies	No opinion
3/13/05	41	57	1
10/13/03	33	64	3

33. (ASKED OF CATHOLICS) Would you personally prefer to have the next pope come from (a country in the developed world, especially Europe, where almost all previous popes have come from) or from (a country in the developing world, especially South America or Africa, where the church is growing the fastest)?

	Developed	Developing	No diff. (vol.)	No opinion
3/13/05	39	22	37	3
10/13/03	43	23	28	6

\*\*\*END\*\*\*